

News from a far country

by Laura370

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Summary: My attempt to write a story in the form of letters - much harder than I thought it would be! So, letters between Jean and Mattie (but this is definitely a Lucien and Jean story).

1. Chapter 1

As always, these are not my characters.

I'd been thinking for a while about writing a DBM story using only letters, when I read Alli-Beth's version (great writing, by the way!). So I decided to have a go myself. It's harder than it sounds!

Nothing profound in this at all, it's just an experiment. Oh, and I've no idea how long letters took to travel between Australia and the U.K. in 1960, so I just haven't worried about that.

My dear Mattie

I've hesitated to write this letter to you. I didn't want to upset you when you can only just have arrived in London. Among all the change and difficulties of moving to a new place, I am sure you don't need to hear about my troubles.

But I have no one else to tell, and I think I will go mad if I don't tell someone. Forgive me.

Yesterday evening, without any warning, Lucien's wife came to the house. She knocked on the door and almost before I knew it, she was sitting in the kitchen, alive and well, and looking at me with great suspicion.

Her name is Mei Lin. She is beautiful, very dignified, and has had a terrible time in China. I can hardly imagine how she has survived all that has happened to her.

But, as you know, we all thought she was dead. You saw the letter confirming her death, just as I did. Even as I write this now I can hardly believe it; she is certainly alive, and still married to Lucien.

Lucien seems as shocked as I am, but we have scarcely spoken about it. He is constantly busy with a new investigation. Mei Lin and I are left in the house together, and when she looks at me I know she thinks I am in love with Lucien. She is right, of course, but that doesn't matter now. She is his wife.

If all this were not difficult enough, I have to tell you that just before Mei Lin arrived, Lucien had begun to ask me to marry him. He had offered me his mother's ring. It's sitting on my dressing table right now, just next to me as I write this. I will have to give it back, of course, but perhaps all this would have been easier to bear if he had not given it to me.

I don't know what to do, Mattie.

With much love,

Jean

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Dear Jean

How I wish I was back in Ballarat with you now! Your letter...what can I say? I am so sorry that this has happened. It seems so cruel. You so deserve to be happy, and I thought when I left that you would be, and Lucien too. I wish I could hug you and say something to comfort you, but I hardly know what to say.

I do know that Lucien loves you, and that you love him. Surely there will be a way round this problem. Does his wife really expect to live with him again as if nothing has happened in 17 years?

I'll say it again, Jean, just remember that Lucien loves you. Everyone who sees you together knows that. He's asked you to marry him! Talk to him, please, before you just give up on him.

Why has his wife come back now, and how did she find him? Surely she must have had someone to help her get to Australia?

Don't worry about upsetting me with your letter. I am upset by the news, but I'm glad you have told me, and even more glad if writing the letter helped you.

Sending you all my love,

Mattie

2. Chapter 2

My dear Mattie

It was such a comfort to get your letter. Receiving it was a lovely moment amid difficult days. I hope you are settling well in your job

and that the nurses' home is comfortable.

Mei Lin has moved to the Soldier's Hill Hotel, so I am relieved to not have to face her every day in the house. She moved out after only one night and Lucien goes and visits her there every day. I try not to think about what they may do or talk about, but Lucien seems to be trying to get to know her again, and I'm sure in time they will rebuild their marriage.

Rose took a photo of Lucien and Mei Lin by the lake, and it has appeared in The Courier. So now everyone knows his wife is back. Perhaps that is for the best.

Yesterday Lucien tried to speak to me about all this for the first time. He told me I must not think I am losing anything. How can he say that? I have lost everything. I'm wondering if I should look for a new job, perhaps even go and stay with Christopher for a while in Adelaide. I can't carry on as things are at the moment.

I was interested in your question about how Mei Lin got out of China and into Australia. I have no idea, but it is puzzling.

With much love

Jean

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Jean

You are far too lovely for your own good. You are letting Lucien have both you and his wife, and he has to realise he cannot do this. We all know he loves you, you have nothing to lose from making him choose. Don't give in without a fight.

I am sorry to speak so frankly, but I am sure there is more to the reappearance of his wife than meets the eye. If Lucien spent 17 years searching for her, with all the contacts he has, without success, how could she just find him without help, and then turn up unannounced?

Please do not walk away from him or go to Adelaide. I'm sure you would come to regret it. You said to me once that you may not have many more chances for happiness; I have seen that Lucien can make you happy, and you have certainly made him happy. I'm sure that in time this can all be resolved, but you need to make him choose you!

London is getting colder and wetter as winter draws on. I rather wish I was with you as summer approaches at home, to encourage you and help you. I would be having words with Lucien too!

The work here is interesting and I'm learning a great deal. Send my love to Lucien, but send him yours first!

Much love

Mattie

3. Chapter 3

My dear Mattie

Your letter was like a tonic when I needed it most. Somehow it helped me feel rather braver, and I have told Lucien that he is not being fair to Mei Lin, and he is not being fair to me. I cannot cope with him treating me with affection, while he remains committed to his wife. He looked shocked, so we will see if anything changes as a result.

Charlie and Rose brought me some photographs today, that she took in the Botanical Gardens. In them, Mei Lin is meeting with Major Alderton, and they seem to be arguing. I'm not sure if you remember the Major, but he and Lucien know each other from his days in the army, and they do not get on well any more, I'm afraid.

So you may be right that Mei Lin's appearance is not as innocent as it appears. But how can I tell Lucien about the photos? He may think I'm just trying to discredit her. But I can't just ignore them either. I think it might be best if I visit Mei Lin myself to talk to her.

So for the time being, I'm staying here. Thank you for being my friend in all this. I often wish you were here to talk to, but your letters are a pleasure to receive.

With much love

Jean

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Dear Jean

Your letter made me rather worried for you and Lucien. The Major seems as though he could be a problem for you both; I know you love a little adventure in your life, but he sounds dangerous. I do remember him, only too well.

Do let me know how your meeting with Mei Lin went and, most importantly, whether Lucien has seen sense yet. You sounded different in your last letter; bolder, and more confident - quite right too!

Must leave for work now,

In haste, but with all my love to you both,

Mattie

4. Chapter 4

My dear Mattie

So much has happened in the last few days, it is hard to know where to start to tell you about it. But this is a happy letter at last, and I did not want to delay telling you everything. Perhaps I should begin with the news that will interest you most!

Lucien made his choice, and just let me say it was the choice both you and I wanted.

As it turned out, the Major was using Mei Lin to get at Lucien. I don't know that she and I will ever be friends, but I can't hate her. Lucien loved her once, and she has had a very difficult time. The Major is dead, and I cannot regret that at all.

Mei Lin intends to go back to Hong Kong to see her daughter, and in time she and Lucien will be divorced. And you may be glad to hear that Lucien finished his proposal, at last, and I have accepted. We are keeping it quiet till the divorce is through, so once again you are my only confidante!

I have so much appreciated your advice and friendship, Mattie. I don't know when we will meet again, but I hope you know there will always be a place for you in our home. We are proud of all you have achieved, and the young woman that you are.

With many, many thanks, from your loving friend

Jean

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Dear Jean (and Lucien)

I am so happy for you both! Such good news, I can hardly stop smiling! I am glad you have this chance for happiness together after so many difficulties.

Although I love the work here, it is not home. One day, I am sure, I will come back home, and I look forward to seeing you both then. You have both taught me so much, about patience, grief and character. I will always be grateful.

With much love

Mattie

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